

The Waking Dream

By Christine Williamson

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Synopsis

Returning home to find Writer in an alarming state of disarray, Companion struggles to understand as Writer explains his/her relationship with their Muse, and the draining particulars of Inspiration.

Characters

WRITER	An erratic, yet talented, writer
COMPANION	A long-suffering, yet tolerant, companion/roommate/test-subject

Setting

The shared common room of a two bedroom apartment, with an adjoining, bar-style kitchen visible. A dormant computer, (part of the COMPANION's territory), is unobtrusively positioned off to the side somewhere, while a more obvious, (and obviously recently used), pen and paper littered work area is prominently placed downstage. A comfy couch, or other such well-worn lounging nest, is present nearby.

Time

Evening, late. Any time of year.

Minimal Setting Options

This piece could easily be performed black box, with nothing but a place to lie and a place to write. In such a case, the volume of the WRITER's rejected and/or unused papers can be increased to amusing levels.

Approximate Running Time: 8-10 minutes

(Lighting/Sound: Lights up on WRITER, sprawled haphazardly on the couch or across the lounging nest. A nearby work area is littered with papers and writing tools, the result of a frenzied marathon of excessive productivity. Crumpled papers dot the edges of the space, but inspired creations are carefully placed in prominent trophy piles.)

Enter COMPANION

COMPANION

(Slows, taking in the mess. Finally stops, askance, surveying WRITER.)

You look terrible.

WRITER

(Unintelligible noise of affirmation.)

COMPANION

Have you been in here all day?!

WRITER

(Unintelligible noise of amusement.)

COMPANION

This isn't funny.

WRITER

(Tired, strained laughter.)

Oh, it's enormously funny.

COMPANION

You sound borderline hysterical.

WRITER

(Looks at COMPANION.)

Only borderline?

COMPANION

(Looks at WRITER in disbelief.)

What on Earth happened?!

(Begins picking up discarded papers, examining them accusingly.)

WRITER

(Watches COMPANION for a moment. Then...)

Those.

(Gestures tiredly at trophy piles.)

COMPANION

What? All these?

WRITER

Yes, all. And don't you dare say only. I'm exhausted.

COMPANION

You've been lying on a couch all day.

WRITER

I was sitting... part of the time.

COMPANION

On a couch. All day.

WRITER

(Dreamily enraptured.)

I was inspired.

COMPANION

By what, exactly?

WRITER

(Blissful.)

My Muse...

COMPANION

And what, Pray tell, is that?

WRITER

Something that mustn't be spoken of with such skeptical hostility. It comes in waves, you see. Great, shining waves of emotional brilliancy that shake the very foundation of my Soul.

COMPANION

You're on something.

WRITER

Inspiration.

COMPANION

Something chemical.

WRITER

I have no need for disgusting pollutants of the blood. You know that. My Muse's touch is more than adequate.

COMPANION

I'll say. It'll be sending you to a hospital at this rate.

WRITER

Never.

COMPANION

Forgive my healthy skepticism, but you sound quite mad.

WRITER

That's because I'm exhausted.

COMPANION

From sitting on a couch all day.

WRITER

From rippling with the waves. They come so fast and touch so deep. It's like a great wind, rushing with the tide, crashing thru the fabric of my Soul. I lie here, weathering it, trying not to drown as the storm rages thru my Heart, and just when I think I can't take it, that surely it must kill me with its passion, the words rise up and flow out of my Heart and onto the paper. And I sit here crying, scribbling fast as I can, terrified to lose a single facet of the experience. Then when I'm done, I look again, imploring the next wave to be as powerful as the last.

COMPANION

And where exactly are you looking?

WRITER

(Crying silently.)

Far away. So very far away. I can barely stand it!

COMPANION

Where is it?

WRITER

World's away!

COMPANION

(Watches WRITER cry, at a loss.)

...

WRITER

That something so intimately eloquent should be so far beyond my reach is torturous!

COMPANION

Why don't you leave it alone, then?

WRITER

I couldn't possibly! The thought of catching it is equally exhilarating!

COMPANION

You sound like you're in Love.

WRITER

Inspiration is Love.

COMPANION

Who is it?

WRITER

Love, and Compassion. And the desire to share what you see when they Touch you.

COMPANION

Who is this person touching you?

WRITER

No one's physically touching me! Have you even been listening?

COMPANION

I have. And a word of sense has yet to sprawl from your lips. Hence my diagnosis. Furthermore, here's my prescription: Confess. Go to your Muse, profess your undying Love and fathomless affection. And stop this ridiculous solitary rippling.

WRITER

You prescribe Tragedy! That's not what this is. Did I say that's what this was?

COMPANION

The implication was obvious.

WRITER

No! It's not! I'm not pining! I'm experiencing. I needn't Make Love to my Muse to Love them. (Though it would, admittedly, probably be nice.)

COMPANION

So, you admit it's a person, then?

WRITER

I admit nothing. I'm inspired perfectly well without that. Can't you see?

COMPANION

I see someone lying on a couch, totally incoherent, spouting off about love and touching.

WRITER

(Disgusted noise. Grabs one of the trophy papers and offers it.)

Read this.

COMPANION
What?

WRITER
Just do it.

COMPANION
(Eyes WRITER suspiciously. Then reads.)
...

WRITER
(Watches expectantly.)

COMPANION
This is some of your best work.

WRITER
Yes.

COMPANION
(Indicates various trophy papers.)
Are you telling me, these are all that good?

WRITER
I've been more productive in the last month than the last three years combined.

COMPANION
How is that possible?

WRITER
I told you. I've been inspired.

COMPANION
Is inspiration always so... Draining?

WRITER
It varies from Artist to Artist, I think. But for me... Yes.

COMPANION
Is it always so one-sided?

WRITER
What?

COMPANION
You look half dead.

WRITER

My Muse is an open book, forever rewriting itself. To Touch my pen so deeply, it must be deeply Touched in return. Though not necessarily by me.

COMPANION

And you're okay with that?

WRITER

Again. What?

COMPANION

Does your Muse know it inspires you?

WRITER

I don't know. I think so. Muses tend to be fairly omniscient. And I did send some of those various places.

COMPANION

If you sent some, how can you not know?

WRITER

Ahhhh... That's the problem with having a distant Muse. They're Famously difficult to reach.

COMPANION

Your Muse is famous.

WRITER

I didn't say that.

COMPANION

No, you said they were, "Distant."

WRITER

Yes. Distant and Beautiful.

COMPANION

Which is code for, "I'm feeling taken with my own cleverness, and I'm going to start playing games with words."

WRITER

You know me very well...

COMPANION

Yes, I do. Well enough to know it's time for you to be asleep.

WRITER

I was half-asleep when you came in.

COMPANION

And you'll be entirely asleep once put to bed. Get up.
(Carefully organizes trophy papers.)

WRITER

I'm not done rippling yet. It comes in waves... And dreams...

COMPANION

Then wave, 'Goodnight,' and say, "Sweet Dreams," and go to bed.

WRITER

You say beautiful things sometimes.

COMPANION

Get up.

WRITER

Have I told you that before?

COMPANION

Not recently. Up.

WRITER

Well, I have today.
(Writer gets up. Sways a bit.)

COMPANION

Tonight.

WRITER

Right.
(Meanders haphazardly towards bedroom door. Stops when reaches it)
I do... Want to Touch my Muse, you know. I want to Touch it as deeply as it Touches me.

COMPANION

I suspected as much.

WRITER

(Silently crying.)
Can you imagine what that would be like? If we were in the same place? Actually Touching?

COMPANION
(Watches, distressed.)

...
I can't... No...

WRITER
Oh, the Magic that might happen then.

COMPANION
Go to bed. Please.

WRITER
(Looks at COMPANION quietly for a moment. Then...)
Sweet Dreams.
(Goes to bed.)

Exit WRITER

COMPANION
I don't know where you live, sometimes. Do we share the same reality at all?
(Looks at the held papers.)
How is it possible for you to go along, day to day, everything the same... And then suddenly do that? Where does... This! Come from? And why should it leave That in its wake?! Oh, Muse. Person, Dream, Ghost, Imagination, or Delusion. Be gentle with my friend. I would not see this growing light burnt out!
(Cries silently, clutching papers.)

(Fade to Black)

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